

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: 2008 Monkfish Research Set-Aside Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NMFS-NEFSC-2008-2001016

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.454, Unallied Management Projects.

Dates: Application Due Date: 60 days after publication date

Funding Opportunity Description: NMFS announces that the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Councils) have set aside 500 monkfish days-at-sea (DAS) to be used for research endeavors under a research set-aside (RSA) program. NMFS is soliciting proposals for research activities concerning the monkfish fishery for fishing year 2008 (May 1, 2008-April 30, 2009). Through the allocation of research DAS, the Monkfish RSA Program provides a mechanism to reduce the cost for vessel owners to participate in cooperative monkfish research. The intent of this program is for fishing vessels to utilize these research DAS to conduct monkfish related research, rather than their allocated monkfish DAS, thereby eliminating any cost to the vessel associated with using a monkfish DAS. Landings from such research trips may be sold to generate funds to help defray research costs. No Federal funds are provided for research under this notification. Rather, projects funded under the Monkfish RSA Program would be provided with additional opportunity to harvest monkfish, and the catch sold to generate income to offset research costs. Projects funded under an RSA DAS award must enhance the knowledge of the monkfish fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made. The Councils and NMFS will give priority to funding research proposals in the following general subject areas: (1) Cooperative stock assessment surveys; (2) Research concerning monkfish bycatch and discards; (3) research to minimize bycatch and interactions with sea turtles and other protected species; (4) research to minimize impacts of the monkfish fishery on essential fish habitat (EFH), or other sensitive habitats; (5) research on the biology or population structure and dynamics of monkfish; (6) tagging studies; and (7) mesh and gear selectivity studies, including studies on gear efficiency. Please note that the research subject areas listed above are not listed in order of priority.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Amendment 2 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (Amendment 2) established a DAS set-aside program whereby 500 monkfish DAS are set-aside annually from the total number of monkfish DAS allocated to limited access monkfish vessels. The set-aside DAS are then distributed to vessels for the purpose of participating in cooperative monkfish research projects. Through the allocation of research DAS, the Monkfish RSA Program provides a mechanism to reduce the cost for vessel owners associated with participating in cooperative monkfish research. The intent of this program is for fishing vessels to utilize these research DAS to conduct monkfish related research, rather than their allocated monkfish DAS, thereby eliminating any cost to the vessel associated with using a monkfish DAS. In this announcement, NMFS is soliciting proposals for research activities concerning the monkfish fishery under the 2008 Monkfish RSA Program.

B. Program Priorities

Projects funded under an RSA DAS award must enhance understanding of the fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made. Research, and additional fishing trips to obtain fish for compensation, may be conducted as specified in the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), if needed, onboard a fishing or other type of vessel, including commercial and/or recreational vessels. The Councils and NMFS will give priority to funding research proposals in the following areas identified as research priorities by the Councils and NMFS.

The numbering of priorities is not intended to indicate preference of one priority over another.

2008 Monkfish RSA Program Research Needs and Priorities:

Program Priority 1: Cooperative stock assessment surveys focusing on: (a) The monkfish fishery; or (b) surveys for monkfish in areas not typically sampled by NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center gear.

Program Priority 2: Research on monkfish bycatch and discards focusing on: (a) Estimating trawl fishery discards separately for monkfish caught as bycatch on Northeast multispecies DAS and on directed monkfish trips; or (b) methods to reduce

monkfish bycatch and discards.

Program Priority 3: Research to minimize bycatch and interactions with sea turtles and other protected species.

Program Priority 4: Minimization of monkfish fishery impacts on EFH focusing on: (a) Impacts of the monkfish fishery on the EFH of other species; or (b) impacts of the monkfish fishery on other sensitive habitats.

Program Priority 5: Monkfish life history focusing on: (a) Monkfish biology; (b) population structure; or (3) population dynamics.

Program Priority 6: Tagging studies focusing on: (a) Monkfish movement patterns; (b) spatial segregation by sex; or (c) growth rates.

Program Priority 7: Mesh and gear selectivity studies focusing on: (a) Monkfish trawl mesh selectivity; or (b) relationship between mesh size and minimum fish size.

C. Program Authority

Issuing grants is consistent with 16 U.S.C. ? 1853(b)(11), 16 U.S.C. ? 1881a(e), and 16 U.S.C. ? 1881(c).

The ability to set aside monkfish DAS for research purposes was established in the final rule implementing Amendment 2 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (70 FR 21927, April 28, 2005), and codified in the regulations at 50 CFR 648.92(c).

D. Cost Principles

Not applicable

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

No Federal funds are provided for research under this notification. Rather, projects selected under the Monkfish RSA Program would be provided with

additional opportunity to harvest monkfish, and the catch sold to generate income to offset research costs. The Federal Government (i.e., NMFS) may issue an EFP, if needed, that may provide special fishing privileges in response to research proposals selected under this program. For example, vessels participating in an approved research project may be authorized by the Northeast Regional Administrator, NMFS, to harvest monkfish in excess of established possession limits. This would be the third year of the Monkfish RSA Program. Two awards were issued under the 2006 Monkfish RSA Program, with these projects recently ending in April 2007. Three awards were issued under the 2007 Monkfish RSA Program, and these projects are expected to commence in May 2007. A total of 137.5 RSA DAS were issued to projects during FY 2006, and a total of 367 RSA DAS have been issued to projects for FY 2007. It is anticipated that 2-5 awards will be made.

Funds generated from landings harvested and sold under the Monkfish RSA Program shall be used to cover the cost of research activities, including vessel costs. For example, the funds may be used to pay for gear modifications, monitoring equipment, the salaries of research personnel, or vessel operation costs. The Federal Government shall not be liable for any costs incurred in the conduct of the project. Specifically, the Federal Government is not liable for any costs incurred by the researcher or vessel owner should the sale of catch not fully reimburse the researcher or vessel owner for his/her expenses.

B. Project/Award Period

The research project may encompass all or part of the 2008 fishing year, beginning May 1, 2008, through April 30, 2009. Any research DAS awarded as part of the 2008 Monkfish RSA Program to compensate for research costs and participation must be utilized by April 30, 2008. Proposals to fund research that would start prior to the 2008 fishing year are not eligible for consideration. Multi-year grant awards may be approved under this RFP. If a multi-year grant award is approved, the research DAS available under subsequent RFPs will be adjusted accordingly.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Grants will be issued.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

1. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, institutions of higher education, hospitals, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, individuals, state, local, and Native American tribal governments. Federal agencies and institutions are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice. Additionally, employees of any Federal agency or Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) are ineligible to submit an application under this program. However, Council members who are not Federal employees may submit an application.

2. DOC/NOAA supports cultural and gender diversity and encourages women and minority individuals and groups to submit applications to the RSA program. In addition, DOC/NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas. DOC/NOAA encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

3. DOC/NOAA encourages applications from members of the fishing community and applications that involve fishing community cooperation and participation.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

None required.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

1. Research proposals for work using an RSA DAS award for the 2008 fishing year must be received within the application submission period to be eligible for consideration.

2. Proposals for different and distinct projects must be submitted separately in accordance with the format requirements in Section IV.B. Multiple stand-alone projects in the same proposal will not be accepted.

3. Any applicant who requests regulatory exemptions that extend beyond the 500 DAS set-aside implemented in Amendment 2 may be required to adhere to the regulations governing the issuance of an EFP by NMFS. As appropriate, NMFS will consult with the Councils and successful applicants to secure the information required for granting an exemption if issuance of an EFP is necessary for the research to be conducted. Furthermore, applicants may be required to provide additional specific information that will serve as the basis for any required environmental impact analyses. Applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment if NOAA determines an assessment is required.

4. If an applicant must submit a request for an EFP to NMFS, it should be received by NMFS at least 60 days before the requested start date of the proposed research to allow for additional review and analysis. No research or usage of research DAS will be allowed until NMFS notifies the applicant that the applicant's EFP request is approved.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application information is available at <http://www.grants.gov>. Electronic copies of the Standard Forms for submission of research proposals may be found on the Internet in a PDF (Portable Document Format) version at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/appkit.shtml> under the title *_Grants Management Division-Application Kit._* Applicants without Internet access may contact Kelly Taranto, NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543, phone 508-495-2312, by fax 508-495-2004, or by email at kelly.taranto@noaa.gov.

To apply for this NOAA Federal funding opportunity, please go to <http://www.grants.gov>, and use the following funding opportunity # NMFS-NEFSC-2008-2001016.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applications must adhere to the provision under "Applications" and the nine requirements under "Required Elements" by the application deadline. Failure to follow these provisions will result in proposals being returned to the applicant without review.

1. Applications

a. Applications submitted to the 2008 Monkfish RSA Program must include a Standard Form 424 (Application for Federal Assistance), including a detailed budget using Standard Form 424A, (Budget Information--Non-Construction Programs), Standard Form 424B (Assurances--Non-Construction Programs), Commerce Department Form CD-511, (Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters: Drug-Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying), and if applicable, Standard Form SF-LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities). These forms are available at <http://www.grants.gov> or at

<http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/appkit.shtml>. These forms should be submitted through the Grants Online website. Applicants submitting hard copy must include one signed original and two signed unbound copies of the application (including supporting information).

b. Applicants must identify the specific research priority or priorities to which they are responding. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, it should list the priority that most closely reflects the objectives of the proposal first. Each application must address only one research investigation. If an application does not fulfill a priority category, it must be clearly stated in the application. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NMFS as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

2. Required Elements

Proposals should be limited to 10 pages, excluding item "f" below. The format may vary, but must include:

- a. A project summary of work to be performed;
- b. A narrative project description to include project goals and objectives. Funding objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but avoiding the "how and why;" and attainable within the time, funding, and resources available. Proposals should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures, and describe how investigators foresee research results being used in the management arena to enhance the understanding of the monkfish resource or contributing to the body of information on which management decisions are made (see Section I.B.). The main body of the narrative should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and include: (1) Project design and management, including who is responsible, expected products, and participants other than applicant; (2) project duration (starting on the first day of the month and ending on the last day of the month); (3) names and affiliations of the principal investigator(s) (PI); (4) contribution and relevance of the proposed work; and (5) a summary of the existing state of knowledge related to the project;
- c. A description of all funding sources (including revenues derived from the sale of fish harvested while fishing under a research DAS) and funding needs. This element of the proposal must include the number of research DAS requested, the expected funds to be generated from the fish harvested while under a research DAS, as well as the expected funds to be allocated to the researcher and any involved fishing vessel;
- d. A budget that includes a breakdown of research costs including labor, vessel, permit, equipment, supplies, and overhead, as applicable;
- e. A list of any Federal regulations that the applicant needs to have waived and a

brief justification for such a waiver. NOAA may not exempt the vessel from any requirement imposed by any state. Therefore, applicants are urged to discuss with state fisheries agencies any proposed landings in their state(s), and must request separately exemptions from state regulations as required by the state(s). NOAA cannot guarantee that state agencies will accede to any particular exemption request;

f. Supporting documents, including resumes, letters of intent for vessels to participate in research activities, and any relevant contracts;

g. Each proposal must identify the RSA activities for the vessel(s) participating in the research project. All vessel(s) selected by the applicant must be listed in the proposal, if possible, or specifically identified prior to final approval by NOAA. Proposals may request that the DAS set-aside be used for compensation trips. The separate compensation trips do not necessarily have to be conducted by the same vessel. In general, compensation (in terms of the value of fish landed) should not exceed 2.5 times the cost of the associated research (see Section V.A.);

h. The researcher's proposal must state the amount of funds required to support the research project including any costs for participation by project scientists or consultants and the amount required to compensate the vessel owner for participation in the research project; and

i. The proposal should also include the agreement between the applicant and the participating vessel operators demonstrating exactly how the research activity will be funded, if possible, or such agreement must be provided prior to final approval by NOAA. Proposals that employ multiple vessels to utilize the DAS set-aside should provide a description of the safeguards that will be used to ensure that the DAS set-aside will not be exceeded.

j. As part of this application process, questions from The Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants, OMB Approval Number 0648-0538, must be answered and submitted with the application. These questions include: A1, A2, A11, A12, B1, C1, D1-D3, E1, E4, F10-F13, H1-H24, H26, H27-29. This form is located at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>. Failure to complete all of the indicated questions will result in the application being considered incomplete.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received on or before 5 p.m. EST of the application due date. Applications submitted through <http://www.grants.gov> will be accompanied by a date and time receipt indication on them. If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copy proposals will be accepted, and date recorded when they are received in the program office. Electronic or hard copies received after the deadline

will not be considered, and hard copy applications will be returned to the sender. Mark hard copy proposals _"Attention 2008 Monkfish RSA Program._

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applicants will need to determine if their State participates in the intergovernmental review process. This information can be found at the following website: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>. This information will assist applicants in providing either a Yes or No response to Item 16 of the Application Form, SF-424, entitled "Application for Federal Assistance."

E. Funding Restrictions

1. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389), are applicable to this solicitation.
2. The RSA harvest time frame must fall within May 1, 2008, through April 30, 2009. Proposals requesting to utilize research DAS prior to or after that time frame will not be considered.
3. The Federal Government shall not be liable for any costs incurred in the conduct of the project.

F. Other Submission Requirements

1. Applications should be submitted through <http://www.grants.gov>. If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copies should be sent to NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543. Mark proposals "Attention--2008 Monkfish Research Set-Aside Proposals".
2. NOAA employees (whether full-time, part-time, or intermittent) are not permitted to assist in the preparation of an application, except that staff may provide information on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, and completion of application forms. Because this is a competitive program, NMFS and NOAA employees will not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals, or write letters of support for an application. However, the Council or NMFS contact person may provide assistance to researchers who are seeking vessels to participate in research projects
3. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA Federal assistance opportunities, including special fishing privileges. The impacts of the 500 DAS set-aside was analyzed in the Final Supplemental Impact Statement (FSEIS) prepared for Amendment 2. Therefore, if the applicant does not request additional regulatory exemptions beyond the use of research DAS, additional NEPA analysis may not be required. Applications that propose research and/or compensation fishing exceeding the scope of analysis contained in the FSEIS for Amendment 2 may require the applicant to provide additional specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses.

4. Proposals must identify the research to be conducted and the total amount of the DAS set-aside requested for the project, including its approximate cash value. If an exemption from Federal regulations is proposed, a list of the specific regulations to be exempted and a brief justification for each regulation to be exempted must be included. Should an applicant submit a request for an EFP to NMFS, the completed application should be received by NMFS at least 60 days before the requested start date of the proposed research to allow for additional review and analysis. A final decision on the applicant's grant request for research DAS will not be made until NMFS has approved the applicant's EFP request, if needed.

5. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant does not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, the applicant should mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 15 CFR part 4, "Public Information," which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the confidentiality of the content of applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

6. Successful applicants will be required to submit project results in electronic form in accordance with data collection protocols of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) and/or other data base formats as may be required by NMFS.

7. Permits and Approvals

a. Vessels conducting certain types of research requiring relief from fishery regulations may be required to obtain an EFP. In order to assist NMFS in determining whether or not the proposed research would require an EFP, researchers should briefly address the following questions:

1. Location and Time of Year - specific time of year and areas where fishing will

occur (coordinates, 10 minutes squares, closed areas, include map if possible);

2. Gear Type Including Mesh Size (trawl, pot, gillnet, dredge, acoustic gear including frequency and amplitude);

3. Fishing Effort (number of vessels, number of tows, length of tows, number of pots, duration of tended gear, sampling frequency, etc.);

4. Catch - estimated species composition and amount (directed catch and bycatch);

5. Regulatory Exemptions - provide any regulatory exemptions that may be necessary in order to conduct the proposed research (closed areas, closed seasons, minimum fish or mesh size, possession limits, etc.).

b. If a vessel is required to obtain an EFP in order to participate in a monkfish research project, that EFP will not exempt the vessel from any requirement imposed by any state. Therefore, applicants are urged to discuss with state fisheries agencies any proposed landings in their state(s), and must obtain any additional permits that may be required by such state(s).

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The review panel convened by NMFS to evaluate proposals submitted in response to this Request for Financial Assistance (see Section V.B.), will evaluate proposals by assigning scores up to the maximum indicated for each of the following criteria:

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of the proposed project: This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the 2008 Monkfish RSA Program, provide a clear definition of the problem, need, issue, or hypothesis to be addressed. The proposal should describe its relevance to RSA program priorities and detail how the data gathered from the research will be used to enhance the understanding of the fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made. If not directly related to priorities listed in this solicitation, provide justification why the proposed project should be considered. (25 points)

2. Technical/scientific merit: This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Special emphasis will be given to

proposals that foster and improve cooperative interactions with NMFS. A clear definition of the approach to be used including description of field work, theoretical studies, and laboratory analysis to support the proposed research, and the ability of the applicant to actually utilize all allocated research DAS during the 2008 fishing year in the area and time proposed is important. The time frame for utilizing research DAS and conducting the proposed research should be clearly specified. Activities that take place over a wider versus narrower geographical range, where appropriate, are preferred. (25 points)

3. Overall qualifications of the project: This criterion assesses whether the applicant, and team members, possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This includes demonstration of support, cooperation and/or collaboration with the fishing industry, and qualifications/experience of project participants. Where appropriate, combined proposals involving multiple principal investigators are preferred versus separate stand-alone proposals on related projects. For proposals involving multiple vessels, special attention will be given to specification of safeguards to ensure that the authorized DAS set-aside will not be exceeded. (15 points)

4. Project costs: This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. Cost-effectiveness of the project is considered. The anticipated revenue from the DAS set-aside should be commensurate with estimated project costs, and generally should not exceed 2.5 times the cost of the associated research. Economic and budget projections should be quantified, to the extent possible. Where appropriate, use of existing equipment (fishing gear) is preferred versus acquisition of new equipment. (25 points)

5. Outreach and education: This criterion assesses whether the project involves a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This includes identification of anticipated benefits, potential users, likelihood of success, and methods of disseminating results. Where appropriate, data generated from the research must be formatted in a manner consistent with NMFS and ACCSP databases. A copy of this format is available from NMFS. (10 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

NMFS will solicit written technical evaluations from up to three or more appropriate private and public sector experts to determine the technical merit of the proposal and to provide a rank score of the project based on the criteria described in the Evaluation Criteria section of this document. Following completion of the technical evaluation, NMFS will convene a review panel, including Council members and technical experts, to review and individually critique the scored proposals to enhance NOAA's understanding of the proposals. Initial successful applicants may

be required, in consultation with NMFS, to further refine/modify the study methodology as a condition of project approval. No consensus recommendations will be made.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. A program officer may first make recommendations to the Selecting Official to applying the selection factors below. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups.
7. Adequacy of information necessary to conduct a NEPA analysis and determination.

Key program policy factors (see 4 above) to be considered by the Selecting Official are: (1) The time of year the research activities are to be conducted; (2) the ability of the proposal to meet the applicable experimental fishing requirements; (3) redundancy of research projects; and (4) logistical concerns. Therefore, the highest scoring projects may not necessarily be selected for an award. All approved research must be conducted in accordance with provisions approved by NOAA, and provided

in an EFP issued by NMFS, if an EFP is required. Unsuccessful applications will be returned to the submitter. Successful applications will be incorporated into the award document.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of research DAS under the Monkfish RSA Program, review of proposals will occur during the 2 months following the date given in this announcement that the proposals are due to NMFS. Initiation of approved RSA project activities should begin during Spring/Summer 2008 for most projects. May 1, 2008, should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that their applications have been recommended for selection to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin project operations. Official notification of selection, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows a project to begin. Notifications will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the Principal Investigator of the project. Successful applicants may be notified either electronically or in writing. NMFS will notify unsuccessful applicants, in writing, by postal mail. If an application is not selected, NOAA will return the proposal and related documents to the applicant.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all DOC awards are contained in the DOC Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389). You may obtain a copy of these notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under the Council and Agency Contact(s) section of this document, or by going to the website: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>. Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact should furnish sufficient information to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by NEPA, for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA Federal assistance opportunities, including special fishing privileges. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/> including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under the description of program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). The impacts of the 500 DAS set-aside were analyzed in the FSEIS prepared for Amendment 2. Therefore, if the applicant does not request additional regulatory exemptions beyond the use of research DAS, additional NEPA analysis may not be required. However, if the research proposal requests exemptions from regulations that extend beyond the 500 DAS set-aside, applicants may be required to provide additional specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses. Applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment if NOAA determines such an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts associated with their proposed research activity. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

C. Reporting

Recipients will be required to submit the following financial and performance (technical) reports. These reports are to be submitted electronically unless the recipient does not have Internet access, in which case hard copy submissions will be accepted.

Financial Status Reports (SF-269 and SF-272) are required to be submitted to the Grants Officer semi-annually.

Performance or progress reports are required to be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer semi-annually. These reports will be due no later than 30 days following the

end of each 6-month period from the start date of an award. The final report is due 90 days after the award expiration.

The format of the final report may vary, but must contain:

1. A brief summary of the completion report (200-word or less abstract);
2. A description of the issue/problem that was addressed;
3. A detailed description of methods of data collection and analyses;
4. A discussion of results and any relevant conclusions presented in a format that is understandable to a non-technical audience. This should include benefits and/or contributions to management decision-making;
5. A list of entities, firms, or organizations that actually performed the work, and a description of how the work was accomplished;
6. A detailed final accounting of all the fish landed, sold, and the disbursement of program income to include a detailed accounting of all funds used to conduct fish research, including those provided through the research set-aside; and
7. Data from research projects must be submitted in electronic format with appropriate documentation to NMFS as requested. All raw data collected under grants issued as a result of this solicitation belongs to, and shall remain the property of the Federal government. Grantees will be required to collect, assimilate, maintain and transmit any and all raw data in a format and time frame that may be specified by NMFS.

VII. Agency Contacts

Information may be obtained from Paul Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), by phone 978-465-0492, or by fax 978-465-3116; Philip Haring, Senior Fishery Analyst, NEFMC, by phone 978-465-0492, or by email at pharing@nefmc.org; or Allison McHale, Fishery Policy Analyst, NMFS, by phone 978-281-9103, by fax 978-281-9135, or by e-mail at allison.mchale@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

Limitation of Liability

In no event shall NOAA or DOC be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to provide special fishing privileges.